

## **Iraqi Archer Exchange Targets Understanding**

The Department of State announced its first international sports initiative with Iraq on July 10, 2003. The Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, partnering with the International Olympic Committee (I.O.C.) and the U.S. Olympic Committee (U.S.O.C.), developed a sports exchange for athletes and coaches from Iraq's National Archery Federation.

The bureau and the U.S.O.C. combined to create an exchange for the 11 members of the Iraqi archery delegation. The group was comprised of seven athletes, three women and four men, plus coaches and managers. The program facilitated their competition in the 2004 Olympic qualifying World Archery Championships July 14-20 in New York City. After competing in New York, their three-week visit continued with a trip to Washington D.C. which included a trip to a Baltimore Orioles baseball game, and then to California for an opportunity to train at the U.S.O.C. archery training facility in Chula Vista.

Commenting on their exchange during a Voice of America Radio service interview, the team's captain said, "The memory that will stay engraved in us is that the peace between peoples is the key answer. Regardless of what happens, the only way to get that [peace] is through activities of this sort, sports activities. "